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STATE FOR EUR/UMB

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/14/2017
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PBTS](#) [PGOV](#) [MD](#)
SUBJECT: REFUSED ENTRY INTO TRANSNISTRIA

Classified By: Ambassador Michael D. Kirby for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (U) On December 14 the Ambassador set out for Tiraspol, accompanied by MCC Director for Moldova Chris Williams, Pol/Econ Section Chief Daria Fane, Interpreter Vlad Kulminsky and a security follow car. At the Transnistrian border checkpoint the delegation was informed that the Ambassador could continue with his driver, but the others could not enter Transnistria. The Ambassador always travels with an interpreter. A series of phone calls ensued to TN Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Parliament trying to fix the situation. The story emerged that "President" Smirnov had given a personal order to permit the Ambassador but no one else. Though our Parliamentary interlocutors tried several approaches to remedy the problem, they eventually acknowledged being powerless to turn this decree around.

¶2. (C) Comment: When we first informed the TN authorities of the Ambassador's plans, we had scheduled only one meeting -- a presentation to the Obnovlenie Party Youth Wing. We had originally tried to arrange meetings with both Litskai and Shevchuk, but both were in Moscow. On December 13, we added two additional meetings to the schedule -- a meeting with Parliamentary Speaker Shevchuk's staffers who would hear a presentation by MCC Director for Moldova Chris Williams about the possibilities for including Transnistrian projects in the Moldovan MCC Compact Program as well as with Chairman of the Sheriff Company Ilya Kazmaly. These changes could have provided the TN authorities a pretext to keep out of Transnistria those accompanying the Ambassador.

¶3. (C) Comment continued: Clearly, a number of people within the Transnistrian leadership are uncomfortable with the growing presence of U.S. Embassy, government and contractor personnel in Transnistria for business. Recent rumors in Chisinau are that "President" Smirnov is ill with cancer and will resign in January. Rumors are that Shevchuk will succeed him. Given that the Ambassador's three meetings were to have been with Shevchuk-associated people and groups, Smirnov could have been sending a signal that he is still the man. It is also possible that following the Ambassador's successful presentation to the radical Proryv youth, Smirnov fears the ideological impact on the youth of the American Ambassador's message.

¶4. (C) Comment continued: Post will maintain its policy of active engagement in Transnistria. We intend to work with Litskai to work out a mechanism so that this type of mishap is not repeated.

KIRBY